



ROLE OF MEDIA IN CLIMATE CHANGE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Climate change has affected the people in terms of ability to earn money, ability to stay healthy and generation of livelihood opportunities. The people have to understand the impact of climate change on their livelihoods. The media can help people respond to changes in climate and availability of key resources across the globe. The media have the potential to support people to reduce the impact of changes in climate on people's lives by contributing to people's ability to secure food, water and shelter, employment, security and other resources. The media can also educate the people about the issues and concerns of climate change and enable people to cope with the climate change. The scientific, conservation, academic and media community need to develop a positive attitude towards climate change and other environmental issues. The climate change science and policy communities are the principal sources of education on environment and development. The media's representation of climate change as a social issue, therefore, focuses on the interplay between the science community and the political society. The meteorologists and communicators are required to work together to provide timely and relevant education on the adaptation measures in times of climate change. The media should play a pivotal role in creating awareness and bringing the positive behavioral change among people in mitigating the consequences of climate change.

Preamble

Climate change has affected the people in terms of ability to earn money, ability to stay healthy and generation of livelihood opportunities. The people have to understand the impact of climate change on their livelihoods. Climate change has brought about poverty, ill health, malnutrition, disease and other disadvantages to the people and environment. A majority of the people are forced to change their livelihoods in urban and rural areas due to climate change. Scholars have given a serious thought to the role of media in times of climate change. The experts and opinion makers are aware of the climate change. The issues and concerns of climate change are not uppermost in people's minds. The level of awareness remains very low due to poor environmental literacy. The media have a social responsibility of educating the people about climate change. The role of media in climate change adaptation is delineated in this article which is based on qualitative research methodology.

Role of media in Climate Change Adaptation

Climate Change

The climate change has posed serious threats to the people and environment. Climate change has a decisive impact on the lives of the people. Climate change occurs due to several factors and processes. Climate change includes the physical sciences, economics, the environmental and social issues, and of course the domestic and foreign policy dimensions. The people have noticed changes in climate including increased temperatures, decreased rainfall and increasingly unpredictable extreme weather events. The water, food, electricity and other resources have decreased over a period of time due to climate change.

The media can help people respond to changes in climate and availability of key resources across the globe. The media have the potential to support people to reduce the impact of changes in climate on people's lives by contributing to people's ability to secure food, water and shelter, employment, security and other resources. The media can also educate the people about the issues and concerns of climate change and enable people to cope with the climate change.

Role of Media

The mass media range from entertainment to news media, spanning television, films, books, flyers, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Internet and social media. There has been commendable expansion of media in the new millennium. The new social media platforms practically offer opportunities for people to get involved in building new communities and making global linkages. The new media are also effective instruments of participatory communication at various levels. The coverage of climate change in the media gained prominence due to important policy events such as the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. This generated a significant amount of news media coverage and there was a very large media presence across the globe. The media report on climate change assumes great significance from the point of view of sustainable development. The media have realized the strength of scientific consensus on climate change established in IPCC Assessment Reports. The media coverage of climate change issues is inadequate according to the empirical evidence.

The role of media in climate change has become vital in view of the following considerations.

- The media introduce new ideas and guidelines about climate change.



- The media increase awareness among people about the impact of climate change.
- The media create public opinion about the consequences of climate change.
- The media enable the people to adapt to climate change.
- The media foster the spirit of responsibility among the people in times of climate change.
- The media increase the people's consciousness and preparedness in times of climate change.
- The media facilitate collective action at multiple levels – individual, community, state or international – with or without government support.
- The media enables the people to respond to climate changes.
- The media can modify the livelihood patterns and practices of people.
- The media enable the people to combat changes in climate and resources.
- The media inspire the people by presenting success stories and achievements of role models.
- The media identify the social and financial incentives to combat climate change.
- The media increase civic engagement and participation in relation to climate change.
- The media create social networks for effective management of climate change.
- The media amplify the role and responsibility of stakeholders of climate change.
- The media sensitize the policy makers, administrators, social organizers and activists about their role in times of climate change.

The people learn about climate change from the mass media rather than scientific publications of research organizations. The media contents on climate change are criticized by the scholars since they are dramatic, eye-catching, entertaining stories that attract audiences but do little to enlighten them about the risks associated with climate change. Controversy is great for ratings and circulation, but obviously constrains effective climate change reporting and public education (Wilson: 2000:18).

Media professionals carry out their work within a challenging political, economic, institutional, social and cultural landscape. The science of climate change is under attack – an attack that is coordinated, well-funded and given constant play in the media. The stronger the scientific consensus on climate change becomes, the more the media suggest that the science is uncertain. It has become increasingly important for scientists and the media to exercise caution in relaying information with high degrees of uncertainty (Ladle et. al. 2005:07).

The media professionals are not experts in environment science and technology but possess limited understanding on environmental issues including climate change. The scientific, conservation, academic and media community need to develop a positive attitude towards climate change and other environmental issues.

The world has witnessed intense competition among specialists within news organizations. The news media rely on a limited cast list in their telling of climate change stories. Climate change can no longer be dealt with purely as a story about the reliability or otherwise of scientific data. The negotiation between correspondents and editors is a critical point in the mediation of climate change knowledge (Smith: 2005:16).

The climate change science and policy communities are the principal sources of education on environment and development. In the age of climate change, the marginalized sections of global society have become the most climate-vulnerable people. They are not educated and enabled properly to adapt themselves to the climate change situations.

Planning that anticipates future climate change scenarios and supports climate-vulnerable people requires the mainstreaming of participation and adaptation into development frameworks and strategies at all levels. To enable this communication, the media can and should play an important role (Panos: 2006:11). In reality, the media have not played a crucial role in facilitating adaptation to climate change. The media have concentrated upon less radical mitigation measures.

The mass media plays a largely unexplored role in the future of climate adaptation aid. Overall, through examinations in various country contexts, these studies have sought to more carefully examine the role of the media in climate change science and policy, through empirical examples of key factors and interactions at this interface.

While journalists have consistently viewed their role as one of information dissemination rather than education, the distinction between these roles becomes blurred in practice. Moreover, while coverage has focused on technical aspects (such as carbon sequestration), it has been more difficult to effectively cover moral, ethical and cultural issues (Boykoff and Roberts: 2007:02).



It is clear that the use of tipping point frameworks imply not only a policy orientation, but also an understanding of how human communication guides social behavior. The appropriateness of tipping points should be debated and assessed in terms that make these assumptions explicit (Russill and Nyssa: 2009:12). The rapid mainstreaming of affected persons due to climate change has to be undertaken by the policy makers and other facilitators. The media institutions are important sources of scientific information among non-scientists in respect of climate change and other environmental issues.

The media's representation of climate change as a social issue, therefore, focuses on the interplay between the science community and the political society. Media coverage falls short of recognizing the wider economic and cultural context of definitions of the issue and involvement of the public in the dialogue (Wu: 2009:20). The media institutions provide routine coverage of climate change by taking into account national and international political agenda and economic considerations. The media have a corporate social responsibility of providing constructive environmental education to the people who matter most in a democracy.

Networks and events that bring journalists and their sources together could help to achieve this by strengthening links between the two groups. In various countries, journalists who report on climate change are coming together to share information and experiences. In each case, the translation of information into local languages will be key to ensuring that climate change news does not only reach urban elites.

The media outlets form climate change 'task forces' that bring together political, business, science and environment reporters to work together for in-depth reports on climate change (Shanahan, 2009:15). There are several stakeholders of environment protection. The policy makers, administrators, scientists, technocrats, communicators, educationists, social organizers and others are responsible for bridging the digital divide in the age of information revolution.

Advances in technology should enable researchers to more easily study information flows between the newspaper press, digital television, and the Internet as they become more integrated. The media play a crucial role in framing the scientific, economic, social and political dimensions through giving voice to some viewpoints while suppressing others, and legitimating certain truth-claims as reasonable and credible (Anderson: 2009:01). The meteorologists and communicators are required to work together to provide timely and relevant education on the adaptation measures in times of climate change.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change from 1992 and the resulting international process with regular international climate summits (the so-called Conferences of the Parties, COP) represent an attempt to tackle this situation by international coordination – with 194 of the world's 206 states participating (Gupta, 2010:06).

Climate change is a relatively new subject in many African media. Most journalists on the continent are largely under resourced. Climate change stories are considered a hard-sell compared to politics and entertainment even though the concept has so many dimensions that could excite public interest as much as traditional politics and corruption stories. But the media can do a lot more in shaping public understanding of climate change and public policies (Tagbo, 2010:17).

The media institutions are primarily governed by the business considerations of the market forces. The human development, inclusive development, sustainable development and integrated development have not become the thrust areas of media services in the age of globalization. The media should change their attitude and humanize the process of communication.

The amount of media coverage of climate change or global warming rose through the end of 2006 and into 2007. However, connections between media information and potential behavioral change are far from straight forward. These communications unfold within a larger political context that feeds back into ongoing media coverage and public perceptions. Therefore, it is worth considering how media representations contribute to perceived possibilities for current and future actions (Boykoff and Smith: 2010:03). The media institutions are important means of cultural production and the production practices within the media industries are ruled by certain logics.

The selection of sources is ideological and hierarchical, and groups with vested interests develop media strategies around climate change. There is criticism of news media generally that they are failing their social role and responsibility (as fourth estate, for example). But in the case of climate change, there is a particular case being made of the failure of the media (Buettner: 2010:05). The media institutions have to alter their logic in covering climate change and in achieving scientific credibility.

A number of themes emerged in its editorials and particularly in its columns: that science was being sidelined by political ideology and that the debate on climate change was imbued with hysterical catastrophism. The aims of any political and



social movement such as feminism or multiculturalism can be debated, accepted or rejected. But climate science and the people and institutions which produce it are not a political or social movement (McKnight: 2010:08).

The role of media in the context of climate change has not been adequately examined by the researchers. Certain parameters and practices are required to enrich the role of media in environment protection. Ideological framing and practical training are the imperatives of effective media coverage of climate change and related issues.

New media agents may act to enable and enhance contact and engagement between individuals, communities, organizations and others with climate change. What is clear is that critical and empirical, evaluations of new media in climate change engagement are needed – an appreciation of both the opportunities and limitations of new media in climate adaptation and mitigation (O'Neill and Boykoff: 2010:10).

Climate Change debates are no longer privilege of a few today. These issues make headlines in print and electronic media. Global warming and climate change are the hot and prioritized topics in the global mass media. Both the Governments and the people depend on Communication and Mass Media not only for disseminating information, but also in setting agenda for the development and other allied activities.

The communication media become powerful tool for disseminating information and diffusion of innovations. Due to depletion of natural resources and burning of fossil fuels there is a great threat to environment. It is high time to save the depleting natural resources and discourage the irrational usage of natural resources by focusing on Sustainable Development (Yadav and Rani, 2011:21).

The media have a great responsibility of facilitating sustainable development in modern times. The people should be educated by the media on judicious use of natural resources. The survival and development of the planet, mankind and all living creatures primarily depend on the role of government, civil society, media and other institutions. The media have great responsibility in climate change and sustainable development.

The importance the media assigns to coverage of climate change translates into the importance the public attaches to this issue. Therefore, any communications strategy that holds climatic change out the promise of effectiveness must be linked to a broader political strategy. Political conflicts are ultimately resolved through political mobilization and activism (Brulle et. al. 2012:04).

The media communicates risk and uncertainty about climate change is critically important. The communication of risk and uncertainty to the audiences by the media is a critical issue. It is vitally important that the public are aware of the risks associated with unmanaged climate change (Nicholas: 2013:09). The media are required to educate the people about climate change, adverse consequences, remedial measures and adaptive procedures.

There has been a significant increase in information available to the public about climate change. Media coverage of climate change and elite cues from politicians and advocacy groups are among the most prominent drivers of the public perception of the threat associated with climate change (Schmidta et. al. 2013:14). Communicating the observed and potential consequences of climate change is a challenging task, one that is often done poorly in the media (Winton: 2013:19). The public concern about climate change has increased on account of media activism and social activism across the globe. The researchers have also examined the relationship between media and climate change.

The scholarship in the field of climate change still concentrates strongly on Western countries and print media. There are multi-paradigmatic and employ different methods that have complementary strengths and weaknesses. A variety of approaches should be used in the research field in order to paint a more detailed picture of media representations of climate change. More diverse scholarly research may help to properly grasp the varying understandings of and perspectives on, climate change that exist around the globe and to feed them into political decision-making (Schafer and Schlichting: 2014:13).

The causes, consequences and implications of climate change should be properly understood by the stakeholders of environment protection. The manifold implications of climate change should be disseminated by the media and non-government organizations. The scientific community and civil society have acknowledged the role of media in sustainable development. The civil society and government should protect and preserve natural resources in the interests of future generations and the climatic chaos. Collective realization and action are essential to protect the environment through judicious use of natural resources which are depleting due to climate change.



The developed countries have brought about degradation of environment and depletion of natural resources due to unplanned modernization, industrialization, urbanization and development processes. The developing countries remain at the receiving end in the age of climate change. The public private partnership is the need of the hour to safeguard the interest of people in the wake of adverse climate change. The media should play a pivotal role in creating awareness and bringing the positive behavioral change among people in mitigating the consequences of climate change.

Conclusion

The media have a great social responsibility of educating the people about climate change and weather conditions. The media have become prominent sources of information, education and guidance on weather forecasting across the globe. The traditional media and new media have their own strengths and limitations regarding weather communication. The social media have become instruments of network development in times of natural disasters. Scholars have also given a vision that facilitates effective media intervention for climate change and weather communication. The goal of sustainable development cannot be achieved in the absence of systematic climate change centered and weather forecasting oriented communication in modern times. It is essential to have a vision backed up by appropriate research action on the role of media in weather communication in developing countries like India.

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